



Library Advisory Board Meeting Monday, February 26, 2024 Via Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83819780963?pwd=OFkraXEyamdRL2tEbFNXcDJZOWswZz09>

District 1- Vacant	District 4- Howells	District 7- Aoh (President)
District 2- Rosenthal	District 5- Almorsy	At-Large- Murphy (Secretary)
District 3- Vacant	District 6- Vacant	At-Large- Groves (Vice-President)

AGENDA

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Approval of Minutes – December 21, 2023 & January 22, 2024**
3. **Public Comment- (limit to 15 minutes)**
4. **Library Reports**
 - a. Staff Report- Youth Services, Jessica Stefano
 - b. Report of the Director- John Euliano
 - c. Review of Financial Report- Deana
 - d. Statistical and Other Reports- John
 - e. Report of District Consultant-Jessica Church
5. **Board and Committee Reports**
 - a. Report of County Council Liaison- Councilman Horton
 - b. Report of Friends of the Library- Kathleen Horan
 - c. Report of Erie Regional Library Foundation- Patrick Miller
6. **Unfinished Business-**
 - a. Library Advisory Board Bylaws
7. **New Business**
 - a. Display Policy
8. **Adjournment**
9. **Appendix**
 - a. Announcements
 - b. News Articles

1. Call to Order
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Connections-

Blasco Adult Programming- Blasco partnered with St. Martin’s Center to host 2 financial literacy classes in January; Pre-Purchase Home Buying Class 1/20 and Financial Wellness 1/22. This partnership brings the financial literacy classes taught by St. Martin’s to a second accessible location. We had 7 register for the home buying class, 3 actually attended and 11 registered for the financial wellness and 5 attended.

Jillian attended the first silent bookclub meeting hosted at Ember and Forge on 1/30. There were a total of **42 attendees** and **3 library cards issued**. Jillian will continue to attend these with items available for checkout, reading recommendations, and card applications.

Rachel collaborated with Penn State’s Happy Valley Launch Box staff to offer “Before You Start a Business” session. **12 patrons attended.**

Idea Lab- Though the Idea Lab shut down the first 2 weeks of the year they still offered over 12 programs in January with **70 in attendance.**

The Idea Lab staff provided a Strong Vincent Autism Support Idea Lab Tour on 1/23/24.

Tech Help Office Hours- the Blasco Library is collaborating with Tech2Elevate to offer Tech Help Open Hours for free one-on-one assistance from a digital coach. Tech2Elevate provides digital skills training and resources to community members to be confident in using technology. Open office hours are first come; first serve on Wednesdays from 1pm-5pm and Thursdays 3pm -7pm in room 216 on the Blasco 2nd floor.

Valencrimes Week- Blasco had a one-week series titled, “Valencrimes.” The library hosted a series of programs dedicated to historical local crimes, Erie lore and Erie’s criminal underbelly.

Blasco Youth Services- staff report Jessica Stefano

Edinboro Branch Programming- Edinboro Branch Library (EDB) had a successful first month of 2024 programming. Total program participation approximately matched participation in January of 2023, and surpassed program participation for the previous three Januaries. Of special note, EDB’s book club/reading group participation has significantly grown. There are now three different book-focused programs at EDB, offering a diverse variety of options for members of the community. Each book club is at or near capacity every month, and one (“1st Tuesday Book Club”) is now exceeding regular capacity.

Upcoming programs include a family-friendly, educational program on prehistoric cave paintings, an adult visual journaling series, and a continuation of EDB’s “ASL for Children” program. See flyer at bottom of agenda packet.

Iroquois Branch Programming- Iroquois provided **20** Library sponsored Programs in January, which brought in **252 patrons**. Programs included partnering with Alliance of Therapy Dogs and outside presenters offering a Stamp UP card making class and Orb photography with artist in residence Brandon Borgia. Youth Services Manager Jessica Stefano offered a Fermentations class wrapping up her time at IRQ. In addition to story time, Youth Services offered two additional programs for school aged students. Those programs covered Basic, Health and Financial PA Forward Literacy requirements.

Zara Ostrander organized the “giving tree” of warm winter wear that was donated by the Social Knitting group from Edinboro, PA. Each hand made garment has a tag that says this item needs a new home. It’s a chance for those in need to have a nice hat, scarf or set of mittens.

In February, Iroquois welcomed a new partnership with NAMI for the teen population at Iroquois. So far, this has had a positive impact on the afterschool teens that visit the library. The team from NAMI is offering an afterschool program each Wednesday from 3-4pm. They are providing activities and snacks. More will be shared as program continues.

Lincoln Community Branch Programming- The Lincoln Community Branch offered **24** programs in January which brought in **467 patrons**. Those programs covered Basic, Health and Civic & Social PA Forward Literacy requirements. They partnered with PennWriters, Alliance of Therapy Dogs, Alzheimer’s Association. They also had several outside presenters including Genealogy with Susan Mueller, Yoga for adults and Teens with Kimber Gavio from Balancing Dragon Yoga and Karen Smock offered a class on Dorset Button Making through the Idea Lab. Amberlee McGaughey, youth services librarian offered two additional programs in addition to story time. Lincoln has been home for the Blue Whale project for February.

Eclipse viewing Party- Lincoln is preparing to have a viewing party on April 8th for the total Solar Eclipse. Lincoln Manager, Colleen Donaldson and Alyssa Johnson, Outreach Manager, are planning self-guided programs for the youth in the Lincoln community room and an opportunity for patrons to hang out together on the Lincoln Library lawns.

Millcreek Branch Programming- Millcreek Branch Library (MCK) had a good first month of 2024 programming. Total program participation was down compared to previous years, but still garnering over 200 individual participants in various programs. Decreased participation is likely due to the transition of management at MCK in December and less programs being offered in January. Recurrent programs are still well attended. Both “Coloring for Grownups” and “Gardening Club” are having consistent participation. New programs include a recently started “Knit and Crochet Club,” the upcoming MCK “Seed Swap,” as well as initial planning for “Intro to Sewing” for children.

Outreach Services- In the past month, Outreach Services attended Grover Cleveland Family Engagement Night, Fairview Parks & Rec Winterfest, and Fairview Elementary STEM Night, reaching over **2,000** people in total. Much planning is occurring for April’s large-scale events to include: Eclipse Day, Poetry Anthology Celebration, and Earth Day Extravaganza.

Bookmobile operations continue, staff noted a positive shift at our Housing Authority locations for youth behaviors while on board.

Collections-

The Tech Services Department began ordering new items for the collection in mid-January after our December break. So far, **3,197 new items** have been ordered for ECPL’s book and AV collections. 3,885 new items were processed by the department and made available for circulation.

Due to increased shipping costs, Interlibrary Loan services have been undergoing a few changes. Staff are working with the District Consultant to streamline borrowing and receiving procedures. Patrons are now permitted 2 ILL requests at a time per card. Staff are also working with libraries in the northwest PA region to share materials in a more cost-efficient manner.

Capacity-

Edinboro Branch Projects- the Library is working with the Erie Regional Library Foundation on several proposed projects for improvement of the physical space at Edinboro. These proposed projects include exterior concrete work to improve ADA access, the addition of a large viewing window on the community room, and possible interior remodeling work to maximize collection/public space.

Millcreek Branch Building Review-physical location is serving the public, although there are certainly limitations. Space is rather tight, but the branch was able to offset the effects of this by engaging in a process of vigorous weeding. This has freed up shelf space, as well as allowed for some logical reorganization of materials. Immediate future building plans include adding a comfortable seating/reading area towards the front of the library for individuals to feel they can casually sit, as well as reorganizing the staff workroom in order to develop better storage solutions for branch materials and supplies.

Director Search- The Library Director salary upgrade was on the personnel agenda Thursday, February 22. Once salary is approved the position will be posted. Positions usually posted for two weeks. Applicants will be reviewed during posting. Posting may be extended if applicants do not meet minimum requirements, which include Master's Degree in Library Science, minimum of 7 years public or private library experience and a minimum of 5 years supervisory/management experience.

Project NePTWNE Update- Gannon University announced their architect selection for Project NePTWNE on Wednesday, February 21. Indovina Associates Architects of Pittsburgh will be design the Great Lake Research & Education Center. Indovina was chosen due to their award winning work at the Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium. Gannon plans to advertise public sessions to present the design and receive community feedback about the design of the space.

c. [Review of Financial Report- Deana](#)

No report this month. Waiting on completion of January financials.

d. [Statistical and Other Reports- John](#)



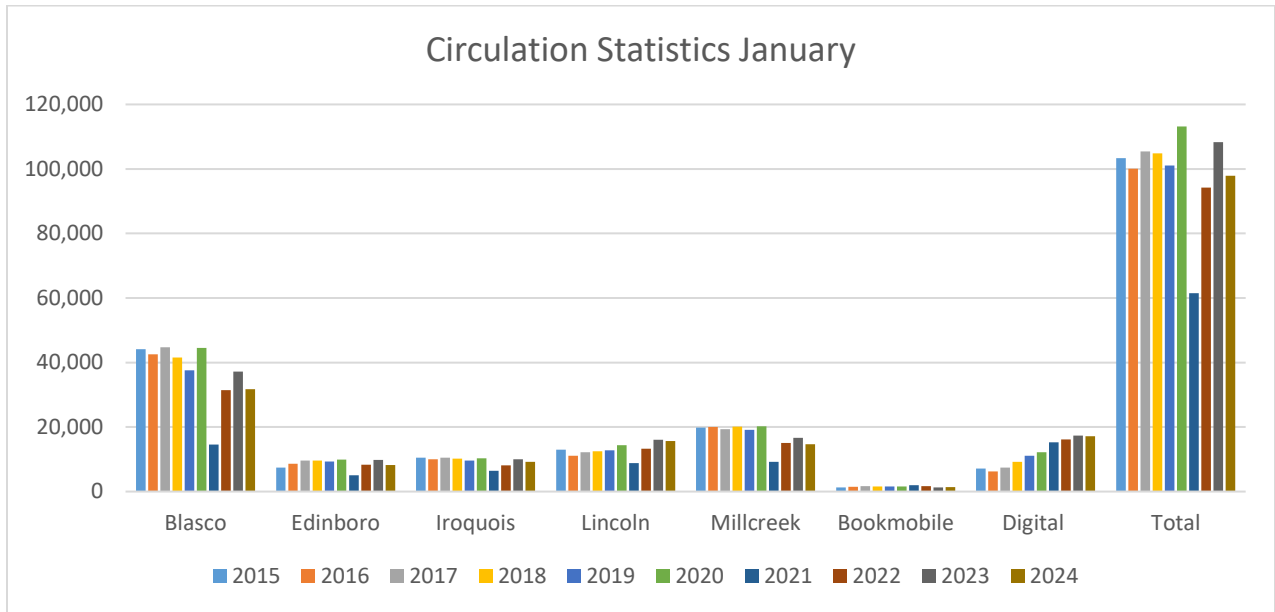
January 2024 Statistics

Numbers Snapshot

- **583** new cards issued, including **75** e-cards

- **3,387** WiFi logins, **3163** public PC logins across locations
- **35,656** patron visits, **20,550** at Blasco and **15,106** at branches and Bookmobile. (↑) **9%** from January 2023 and (↑)**34%** from January 2022

Circulation



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Blasco	44,131	42,512	44,687	41,536	37,585	44,550	14,593	31,483	37,162	31,690
Edinboro	7,466	8,661	9,593	9,600	9,311	9,905	5,030	8,364	9,863	8,185
Iroquois	10,539	10,025	10,492	10,208	9,597	10,340	6,445	8,083	9,979	9,205
Lincoln	13,002	11,151	12,164	12,525	12,766	14,411	8,865	13,261	16,047	15,621
Millcreek	19,826	19,999	19,345	20,130	19,132	20,200	9,179	15,106	16,613	14,675
Bookmobile	1,264	1,445	1,683	1,627	1,595	1,571	2,017	1,716	1,321	1,358
Digital	7,101	6,278	7,482	9,209	11,113	12,207	15,312	16,179	17,366	17,153
Total	103,329	100,071	105,446	104,835	101,099	113,184	61,441	94,192	108,351	97,887

January 2024 circulation numbers are down compared to January 2023 across the whole ECPL system. An initial first step in improving circulation numbers will be to display a selection of relevant materials from the collection to accompany all programs occurring at each location.

e. [Report of District Consultant-Jessica Church](#)

District Services Report as of February 21, 2024

Updates for ECPL LAB Report

Submitted by Jessica Church, District Consultant

Annual Reports

District member libraries are in the process of adding data to their 2023 Annual Reports for the Office of Commonwealth Libraries. Statistics gathered over the year include collections, circulation, programming, and financials. Most of this data is then shared with the Institute of Museum and Library Services, which collects similar data nationwide.

Interlibrary Loan Delivery

We've concluded the pilot program for testing out delivery in Crawford. While there were a few logistical bumps, overall, we're confident that we'll establish a successful delivery initiative. Using County Coordination Aid funds (also State Aid, not Erie County funding), we're working on the bid process for acquiring an additional vehicle to supplement delivery in Erie County for continued service.

5. Board and Committee Reports

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6. Unfinished Business-

- a. Library Advisory Board Bylaws

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9. Appendix

- a. Announcements

-Next meeting is Monday, March 18, 2024 at noon via zoom

- b. News Articles

The Last Word- Print Books Are Still Popular. Want Proof? John Last Erie News Now
February 16, 2024

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ki_qr5AejQg

Erie Times-News, February 1, 2024

Book Lover's sale at Blasco **Library**, 150 E. Front St., Feb. 15, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Feb. 16, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Feb. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. A variety of genres available in paperback including fiction, romance, and mystery as well as children's books, large print books, puzzles, CDs and DVDs. The sale will be held in the Admiral Room.

Blasco **Library** belongs to residents of Erie County



Your Turn
Kathy Dahlkemper
Guest columnist

It has been months since we first heard of the leasing of over 3,000 square feet of space within the Erie County Blasco **Library** to Gannon University for their Project NePTWNE. As with most Erie County residents, I believe Project NePTWNE is a worthy endeavor and can benefit our community. Yet, like many residents, I believe the Blasco **Library** is the wrong location for this project. I have heard arguments that the **library** use of space is changing and, somehow, allowing Gannon to occupy this large section of the **library** will benefit the library's future. From my years as County Executive of Erie County, I believe this could not be further from reality.

Libraries are changing and it is the obligation of Erie County government to continue to evolve the **library** for the needs of today and tomorrow. A great example of this occurred with the development of the Idea Lab, the Media Lab and the Teen Space at Blasco **Library** while I was in office. Just a few years before we opened the Idea Lab, most people had never experienced working with a 3D printer. At the time, we didn't realize there was going to be such a great need for this printer and other innovative equipment in the **library**, which allows residents to make their ideas a reality. The Erie County Idea Lab is now the first stop for many new entrepreneurs who get assistance from the Beehive Network, of which the Blasco Idea Lab is part. What is the next great change that will need to come to our **library** to provide the necessary resources for the future? When we figure that out, we likely won't have the space to provide those resources if Gannon is occupying a large amount of space within the Blasco.

I have heard it said that there is "extra" room at the Blasco and we needn't worry. I find it hard to see how things have changed so drastically in the two years since I left office, but if we do have available space, why is the county not moving its own offices into that building? The county has numerous leases for office space, averaging approximately \$15/sf in cost to the taxpayers. One example is the Veterans Affairs Office, now located at the Intermodal Center, just across Holland Street from the Blasco. From public records, it appears we, the taxpayers, are paying over \$20/sf for that space. Maybe the county should be looking at

moving that office into the Blasco space, saving the taxpayers of Erie County significant money.

Gannon will be paying only \$7/sf for a 25-year lease without any increase in cost over that time period. This certainly does not cover the cost of any of the office leases currently in place with the county. With the huge tax increase put forward by County Executive Brenton Davis and approved by County Council in the 2024 budget, all taxpayers should be outraged that the county executive is not looking at how he can cut expenses rather than giving away our public space for a song.

Some have said only a handful of people are against the Gannon's Blasco lease. I have talked to many about this issue and have yet to talk to anyone who believes it is the best use of our **library** space and a good deal for the taxpayers. I commend those that have been protesting in front of Gannon, the Erie County Courthouse, St. Peter Cathedral, St. Patrick Church and elsewhere. They are looking to the future, our children's future, and showing great concern for the potential loss of the only public **library** within the city limits.

I have spoken to both Bishop Lawrence T. Persico and Gannon President Dr. Walter Iwanenko to express my great concern with this project. I have asked both about the morality of this "deal." Just because the county executive offers a good deal to your institution, it does not make it morally right to accept the deal if it negatively impacts the residents of our county, particularly those with the least personal resources who depend on the **library** to provide technology and offer opportunity for them to live their best lives.

I ask both County Executive Davis and Gannon leadership to reconsider the lease they have signed for the Blasco **Library** space. I ask Gannon to do their due diligence and look at all possible locations for Project NePTWNE on the bayfront. I ask the county executive to have his **library** leadership team continue to research and propose new "public" ideas to continue to allow Blasco to lead the state and the nation in providing the most impactful opportunities at the **library** that our residents deserve.

As we look to the future, we must learn from the past. The Iroquois Nation made decisions based on the impact the decision would have for seven generations. I ask that we look at least one generation forward, keeping the entire Blasco site "public" and serving the residents of Erie County — as it has done so well for the past 27 years.

Kathy Dahlkemper served two years in the U.S. House of Representatives and then two four-year terms as Erie County Executive from 2013 to 2021, before retiring from political life.

Residents battle cold to defend the library

January 21, 2024 | Erie Times-News (PA)

Author/Byline: A.J. Rao; Erie Times-News | Page: A1 | Section: News

1222 Words | Readability: Lexile: 1420, grade level(s): >12

[Read News Document](#)

Davis and Gannon officials say the center — a part of the school's \$24 million water quality initiative known as Project NePTWNE — will serve as a laboratory for students as well as an interactive learning space and ecotourism attraction at the bayfront.

On a particularly frigid day in late November, an 86-year-old Doris Cipolla stood undeterred at the corner of Peach and 6th streets in downtown Erie.

Waving to drivers and pedestrians, the retired English teacher who had taught for more than 30 years in Erie public schools held up a large sign that, to her, aptly justified her braving the cold.

It read simply, "Libraries Belong to the People."

Cipolla, who was joined by about a dozen others that day, was protesting Gannon University's lease of more than 3,000 square feet of space inside Blasco Memorial Library, the county's main public library.

The lease, which was championed by Erie County Executive Brenton Davis and approved by Erie County Council in October, allows Gannon to construct and operate a water research and education center on the eastern wing of the library's first floor.

Davis and Gannon officials say the center — a part of the school's \$24 million water quality initiative known as Project NePTWNE — will serve as a laboratory for students as well as an interactive learning space and ecotourism attraction at the bayfront.

Opponents, however, say the lease is a flagrant attack on the library and allows a private entity like Gannon to rent and deprive space from a vital public asset.

"Any infringement of this nature is the beginning of the demise of our public library," Cipolla said.

Since November, opponents to the lease have formed a group called "Keep Our Library Public" and have staged several demonstrations — at Gannon, the library, the County Courthouse and even St. Peter Cathedral — to raise awareness and pressure Gannon and county officials to drop the lease and relocate the center elsewhere.

The group has already acquired roughly 4,000 signatures on petitions in support of their cause and enjoy support from members of the Erie County Library Advisory Board and the Friends of the Erie County Library.

While Gannon has requests for proposals out to architects and anticipates the center to be finished by the end of 2024, the group shows no signs of slowing down, protesting at Gannon as recently as this past week and holding a "Blasco Fiasco Protest" at the Erie Maennerchor Plaza on Jan. 31 at 6 p.m.

"We're not giving up," said Anna McCartney, one of the group's founders. "We want people to know that we're not against the Gannon program. We're against them taking space in our public library. They should use their moral and ethical responsibility and move to another location."

'Misinformation' and mistrust surround library dilemma

Davis has dismissed the protesters as an insignificant number of residents — a "very small, small group of folks," as he put it during a December news conference — who are not representative of the entire county.

He claims their opposition is fueled by misinformation and stressed that no library jobs, programs or services would be cut as a result of the new center. Rather, he said the center will add new programs; open up space for the public; generate interest in Erie's connection with Lake Erie; and ultimately attract more people to the library.

"This is value added. There's nothing (being) taken away," he said.

But protesters are skeptical and point to the manner in which the lease was approved.

Emails obtained by the Erie Times-News show Davis had been discussing the lease with Gannon as early as June, but residents were not made aware of the lease until three business days prior to council approving it in October. The public only had one day — the day of the vote — to voice any objections.

The lease also comes amid a series of turbulent events at the library that protesters say only fueled their mistrust in Davis' actions.

In June, Library Director Karen Pierce, a Davis appointee, ordered librarians to relocate a Pride Month book display from the entrance of Blasco's children's section. The decision, which was condemned by local LGBTQ+ groups, sparked protests, read-ins and multiple resignations from the Library Advisory Board.

The months that followed saw the abrupt resignations of Pierce and the library's youth services director. Davis also attempted to cut several library positions from the 2024 budget as part of a cost-saving measure.

County Council voted to override those cuts.

For Library Advisory Board Vice Chairperson Kara Murphy, the series of events, along with the lack of public notice and engagement surrounding the Gannon lease, have created the impression that the library is "under attack."

"Over the past months, I have found myself increasingly dismayed, disappointed and worried about the direction in which our Erie County Public Library System is headed under the current county leadership," she said at a board meeting in December. "The absence of meaningful community engagement and a feeling of rushing the lease through the approval process has left some feeling distrustful of the county's intentions and left a bad taste in people's mouth."

Will the new County

Council take action?

County Council's new composition has been an optimistic turn for protesters.

At council's annual reorganization meeting on Jan. 2, newly elected Council Chairman Terry Scutella, in his first public comments as chairman, said he was "not happy with the lease" and later told the Times-News he would vote to rescind it if it came up for a vote.

"If it takes council to do it, I'm willing to do it," he said. "If it's something that we should maybe sit down and talk about, with council and Gannon, maybe we should start that conversation all over."

Council members Andre Horton, Chris Drexel and Rock Copeland have also voiced disappointment in the lease and, together with Scutella, make up the necessary four votes to rescind it.

But getting an additional fifth member to override a likely Davis veto could be out of reach.

Councilmembers Ellen Schauerman, Charlie Bayle and Jim Winarski have all publicly voiced support for Gannon's plans at the library. Winarski, breaking from his Democratic colleagues, told the Times-News he has "no intention" of rescinding the lease.

"I believe it'll be beneficial to Erie County as a whole with some additional revenue that can be put towards our library budget, which is a big part of our county budget," he said. "I have no intention on wavering on this as I believe it is going to be a great asset for the community for many years to come."

Horton said the inability to override a veto should not deter council from introducing a measure to rescind.

He added that council should first identify all legal repercussions before bringing an ordinance to a vote.

Those repercussions, according to Council Solicitor Tom Talarico, could involve Gannon suing the county for specific performance and having a court demand that the county fulfill its end of the contract. Or, Gannon could sue for damages due to breach of contract, he said.

"If Gannon wants to sue us, so be it," Scutella said. "They'll be suing the residents of Erie County."

A.J. Rao can be reached at arao@gannett.com. Follow him on X @ETNRao.

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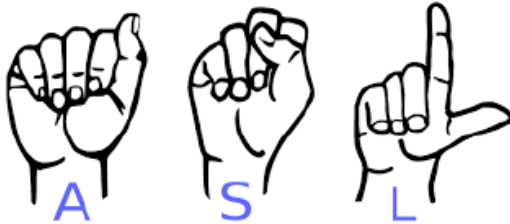
EDINBORO



YOUTH PROGRAM

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

Monday, January 29th | 5:00–6:00 PM
Edinboro Branch Community Room



Children ages 2–7 years old are invited to attend a sign language story hour! The Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf will be offering this program for children who are hearing, deaf, or hard-of-hearing. During this program, children and families will learn signs related to the book, as well as make crafts inspired by the story. A Certified Teacher of the Deaf will lead this program.

Registration is required for this free program. To register, call the library at 814-451-7081 or visit the events calendar at <https://events.erialibrary.org>.